1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23
[P V]

# PREFACE

THE present volume is the tenth published report of the Papuan Government on anthropology. It was also accepted and approved by the University of Adelaide as thesis for the Honours degree of M.A.

The aim of the book is primarily ethnographical. Interpretations of native customs have been essayed only in passing, and no attempt has been made to criticize them from the practical view-point. A Government anthropologist, however, must make some show of being a practical one. If those who have dealings with the Orokaiva—perhaps those also who have dealings with other native peoples—are helped by reading these pages to know their men better, then even pure description is not devoid of practical usefulness. Anthropology, if not necessarily a full-time job, is at least a slow business; and the magistrate, amid a multitude of distractions, cannot always find time for it. But knowledge of native custom is admittedly essential to good government; and books of this kind, in so far as they do something to supply this knowledge, can fairly lay claim to a practical value.

The information presented here was got together during two sojourns in the Northern Division, the first from September 1923 to February 1924, the second from July 1924 to March 1925—a total of about fourteen months. During these two periods I visited most parts of the Orokaiva country. For various reasons I concentrated mainly on the central Aigā tribe, and secondarily on the Binandele and Wasida. But all the other tribes were visited for shorter periods, and as the result of a general survey I found it possible to embrace the whole people in one ethnographic account.

Although the various tribes speak dialects of one and the same language, there are considerable differences between them, and I never gained a fluent speaking knowledge of any one of them. Several very good English-speaking inter-

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23



124 preters, however, were available—especially one Ihipa, a man of fine intelligence and character, who had spent his childhood in the service of white men, at a time when the Northern Division was a scene of great mining activity; and another Bapia, who had been one of the best students of the Anglican Mission. Furthermore there was no lack of returned labourers, ex-police, and so forth, who spoke that simplified version of the Motuan tongue which is something of a Papuan *lingua franca*.

123 On the plains of the Northern Division working conditions are comparatively favourable, especially by reason of the general accessibility of the country, and the distribution of its inhabitants. It was my practice to make camp for longer or shorter periods in the Government 'rest-houses' which are erected for the convenience of officers on patrol. These houses are usually placed in the more important villages, and actually within the limits of the settlement; so that one was enabled week in and week out to follow the course of village life as it went on around one's habitation.

But every ethnographer expects to be able to do this. The special advantages which one enjoyed in the Northern Division arose from the fact that the plains were well populated, and this by tribes who were more or less homogeneous in language and culture. Being quartered for some months in the Aiga village of Korisata, for instance, I found fifteen villages within easy reach—so easy that, visiting the most distant of them I could spend several hours at work there and return to my camp in the afternoon. A good walk to one's destination; a few hours' work; an *al fresco* lunch spread out on a banana-leaf table-cloth, and beguiled by some reading (always, I confess far removed from anthropology and Papua); then a second session; and finally a good walk home—such was the routine of those little excursions which have always been the pleasantest part of field-work as I have attempted to carry it out.

Where this frequent visiting of not-too-distant villages is possible it carries with it several distinct advantages. In the first place one is likely to get wind of the social happenings of the district, near or far. Sometimes through secretive-